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SUBJECT: IRAQIS STILL THIRSTY FOR TURKISH WATER AFTER  
TURKISH PRESIDENT,S VISIT TO BAGHDAD

REF: A. ANKARA 460

[1](#)B. BAGHDAD 847

Classified By: Acting Political-Military Counselor Philip Kosnett for r  
easons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: GoI contacts are pleased with Turkish President Gul,s visit to Iraq last week. They described a trust and warmth between the two countries not known for years. However, differences remain over Iraq,s desire for an increased flow of water from the Tigris and Euphrates. In the absence of game-changing political commitment, we expect no significant new agreements on water among Turkey, Iraq and Syria in the next few years. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (C) Contacts in the MFA and the Ministry of State for National Security Affairs (MSNSA) echoed Turkish reports (ref A) report that Gul,s visit was a success; and that GoI leadership and staff are tremendously pleased with the results and reported positive dynamics. MFA Turkey desk officer Said Murad spoke of Gul,s trustworthiness and said that because the GoI feels comfortable working with Gul, the two countries have a strong future. MSNSA ministerial advisor Haidar Dusche described a relaxed, environment during the meetings.

[1](#)3. (C) While contacts spoke of positive outcomes of the meetings, including an economic memorandum of understanding that will quadruple trade between Iraq and Turkey from \$5 to \$20 billion over the next four years, the issue of immediate importance was water. Although media reported that Gul agreed to double water resources available to Iraq, the Turkish Consul General in Mosul who attended every meeting with Gul denied these reports to Agriculture Counselor.

[1](#)4. (SBU) GOI officials remain deeply concerned about Iraq,s dwindling water resources. According to Embassy analysis, Iraq is in its second year of drought, arable land is disappearing at the rate of 5 percent annually, and strategic reserves of water are mostly depleted. While Turkey has little ability to control water flow on the Tigris with only three dams, it has significant control over the Euphrates with 22 dams. A formal 1987 water-sharing pact signed by Turkey and Syria states that Turkey will provide 500 cubic meters per second of water on the Euphrates to Syria. In 1990, Iraq and Syria signed a bilateral agreement sharing Euphrates water with 42 percent going to Syria, 58 percent to Iraq.

[1](#)5. (C) A trilateral Turkey-Iraq-Syria committee on water has been meeting since 2006. At the technical level, progress has been slow, as technical experts cannot agree on the data. As scientists and senior government officials continue to collaborate and build trust, Embassy Baghdad,s water resources expert expects a new agreement may be drafted in the next three to five years.

¶6. (C) For now, water increases will depend on high-level diplomacy. In March 2009, Iraqi President Talabani attended the Fifth World Water Forum (WWF) and asked Turkish officials for more water, according to press accounts. PM Maliki confirmed to Charge d'Affaires that water issues were discussed during Gul's visit (ref B). Short of a formal agreement, Iraqi water resource officials told us that the GOT has agreed to help as much as possible. Whether a coincidence or not, water flow on the Tigris improved in week after Gul's visit.

¶7. (C) MFA's Murad stated that it's easy for Turkey to make promises, when there's plenty of water from snowmelt and spring rains but the true test will come in the heat of summer. He also cautioned that Syria could claim any extra Qsummer. He also cautioned that Syria could claim any extra water for itself and speculated that in the future, Turkey may offer water in exchange for GoI action against the PKK or increased oil or gas resources.

¶8. (C) Comment: In the absence of game-changing political commitment, we expect no significant new agreements on water among Turkey, Iraq and Syria in the next few years. Before a new agreement can be reached, trust and transparency among the three countries must improve. Political will is not the only variable: scientists must come to agree on the data and the scope of the problem, as well as viable solutions. Even if Iraq wins marginal increases in water from Turkey thanks to improving bilateral relations, continuing drought would leave Iraq's water situation precarious. End Comment.  
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